

**Mayor's Report for October 10, 2020, General Meeting
(Drafted for packet deadline October 5, 2020)**

1. Grandpa's Farm Road Bridge is complete. Our primary public works task during September was to construct the Grandpa's Farm Road Bridge over Harry Hall Creek. This is the first project in Alaska to be completed with funding from the Bipartisan infrastructure bill. The bridge replaces a failing, perched culvert that was a fish passage barrier in addition to presenting a road traffic hazard. Glacier Bay Construction, as always, did a fine job. This was the seventh timber bridge they have constructed here with US FWS and other grant funding as part of the Fish Passage Improvement Project since 2016. The bridge will now provide a safe crossing for traffic for decades to come and rearing salmon fry will no longer be challenged by the perched culvert as they seek to reach habitat from the bridge upstream five miles into the National Park. Hooray for the fish and for the safer driving!



We are thankful to US Fish and Wildlife Service for funding the \$535,000 bridge project, and especially to Andy Stevens, the FWS Habitat biologist who offered us the opportunity to do the project and was our POC throughout. Thanks also to Brad Melocik of Dowl Engineering for the project design and construction advice. Thanks to neighbors Kathy Streveler, Hank Lentfer, and Anya Meyer for graciously permitting construction detours across their properties. Thanks to Paul Barnes and Melissa Senec for graciously enduring construction on the edge of their lot. Thanks to Western Wood Structures for the bridge package manufacturing—in times of tight supply chains and high wood and steel costs. And

especially thanks to Glacier Bay Construction for bidding the project with all its uncertainties and for working diligently through the unexpected issues of the stream and site reconstruction. We are grateful always to Senator Lisa Murkowski for her support of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill that funded this project and for working hard to help Alaskan communities to qualify for infrastructure funds.

2. Softball field. Three months ago, we applied to DOT&PF for a special use permit for local use of the softball field by the Post Office. The lot is a DOT airport lease lot and DOT informed us last summer of the need for a permit. The process is taking longer than expected. When I checked in with the Leasing point of contact on Tuesday 10/4 here is what she said:

“We are still working on the Section 4(f) determination (getting approval for a recreational activity on the Airport). It requires research and I have been slammed with urgent items all summer so it is taking a bit longer than I expected. That said, I am almost done and was actually hoping to get it off this week. Then our Environmental section will be working it and getting it signed off. If the 4(f) determination gets approved, I will next need to get DOT&PF commissioner and FAA approval. If that gets approved, the application will need to go through an internal DOT&PF application review and a 30-day public notice period.

“So we are still working the process, it is just a bit of a complicated application so is taking a bit longer than other applications. The softball field has been in its location for years, so I don’t think a few more weeks or even months will matter at all as long as we come out the other end with a valid and secure agreement for you.”

I will continue to follow up monthly. We should be able to have it in place by softball season next summer!

3. Airport Ditch Cleaning. I continue to press DOT, requesting that the DOT Airport ditches be cleaned to open them to handle floods through the gravel pits onto Wilson and Rink Creek Roads when the Salmon River overflows in the National Park. Having had no responses to emails over the last two months, I emailed the DOT Commissioner on October 3 asking for assistance. Cleaning the ditches is essential to assurance that the City’s efforts will be sufficient to contain the flooding and direct it to tidewater via the DOT airport ditches.

4. City Treasurer Hiring. We were sorry to lose Eduarda Loggins as our Treasurer the first week of September. We have had the position posted for three weeks and are holding it open until we have a satisfactory candidate. We hope to make an offer very soon. In the meantime, Ben Sadler has stepped up as Acting Treasurer. Ben was the City’s first City Clerk and Treasurer when we first incorporated and has operated a bookkeeping business off and on since then, so he knows the financial ropes. We thank former Treasurer Phoebe Vanselow for helping get Ben up to speed with recent developments and processes.

5. Public Works Management Contracted. We are pleased that local resident, John Barry, PE, has agreed to help us get more projects done by serving on a consultant basis as a contract project manager for select assigned projects. We will pay John out of funding appropriated for specific projects. This will enable us to capture grants for infrastructure projects for roads, marine facilities, DRC facilities and get those projects done more quickly. John’s first project is the Good River Bridge repairs. He reviewed the bridge inspection reports and recommendations from PND Engineering and helped us select the best

options as we seek a grant for the needed repairs. Once funding is identified John will continue to manage the project through construction.

6. Septage Handling. City Administrator Kathy Leary reports on her work to improve the reliability and frequency of septic-pumping services. John Barry, PE, is also advising us. This month we introduce a code change to authorize the city to support septage-handling by providing holding tanks to enable more efficient services. We continue to work with Juneau Septic Pumping Service to implement the system. We have a new project scoping document and non-code-ordinance funding appropriation for the capital purchase of the tanks on the agenda this month. With the addition of the authority and installation of the storage tanks we will be prepared to support improved service in the months ahead.

7. It's been a productive year, enabled by a supportive City council and staff. Despite the trials associated with continuing city services through a pandemic, I'm pleased we have served the public well and have completed so many good projects. The Council's support for more staff hours this fiscal year has enabled better service delivery. City Hall hours have been increased from four days per week to five. I have been surprised to see so much business traffic into City Hall on Fridays for vessel stickers, business licenses, tax payments, voting, and other business. Extra staff hours have supported more project work, faster processing of payments and other services. Having the City Administrator on full time is a major help. At the library increased hours have enabled more programs for young readers. The DRC was able to hold a successful household hazardous waste event. Our Marine Facilities Coordinator, Ben Sadler, oversaw the best marine summer activities ever. His leadership and guidance at the float system kept things orderly and productive. Thanks also to the charter fishing firms who set a new, higher standard for compliance with environmental expectations and cooperation.

I am especially appreciative of the many dedicated volunteers who extend the ability of the city to deliver services at the library, the Community Chest, the Gustavus Volunteer Fire Department, at the Salmon River Park, and more. Our park looked great for the Independence Day celebration and all summer long because of the volunteer work to clean up the forest edges, mow the grass, and plant flowers in boxes and hanging baskets. Summer readers also planted flowers at the library, which continue showy even into early October. *Thank you all for caring so much for our community!*

We had a busy construction summer with many improvements to roads, flood control, cul-de-sac turnarounds, parking areas, and capped off with the completion of the Grandpas Farm Road Bridge. The recovery work from the December 2020 flood is nearly complete. We worked with FEMA in endless zoom meetings and untold hours of documenting project costs. We will recover over \$200,000 in funding, which we will turn back into doing more useful road and drainage projects. I thank former City Administrator Tom Williams for his detailed work to document project costs and enter data into the FEMA grant database for recovery. He was more patient with the process than I could ever be. And our new City Administrator Kathy Leary has hit the ground running, also with remarkable patience—quickly getting up to speed on the FEMA and US FWS grants and so much more.

In conclusion, I'm thankful to our hard-working effective staff, volunteers, and to the council for its guidance and support this Council year. Together we have moved the City of Gustavus forward.

Mike Taylor
Mayor